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Testimony of

**Ray Rossomando, Legislative Coordinator
Connecticut Education Association**

Before the

Labor and Public Employees Committee

**Re: House Bill 5465 AAC Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain
Municipal Employees**

February 10, 2011

Good morning Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Ray Rossomando, Legislative Coordinator for the Connecticut Education Association, representing 40,000 teachers across the state.

I am here to speak in favor of proposed **HB 5465 AAC Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees**.

The CEA is supportive of HB 5465 AAC Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees. Connecticut teachers work shoulder-to-shoulder with para-professionals in our classrooms every day, from morning bell to afternoon buses.

CEA believes that school para-professionals should be permitted to receive the same protections for tending to their personal and family medical needs as their colleagues. Under current law, para-professionals are excluded due to the nature of their scheduling, which is the same as for school teachers, but treated differently in the law. This should be corrected.

Moreover, extending the applicability of FMLA to para-professionals is consistent with the Congress' intent in passing protections for family and medical leave. It is helpful to be reminded of the legislation's own words. According to the US Code (29 CFR 825.101) FMLA is intended to:

1. "Allow employees to balance their work and family life by taking reasonable unpaid leave" for certain family and medical reasons.
2. "Balance the demands of the workplace with the needs of families, to promote the stability and economic security of families, and to promote national interests in preserving family integrity."
3. "Accommodate the legitimate interests of employers, and in a manner consistent with the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment in minimizing the potential for employment discrimination on the basis of sex, while promoting equal employment opportunity for men and women."

Congress recognized in the Act that "increasingly, America's children and elderly are dependent upon family members who must spend long hours at work." It premised its action "on two fundamental concerns - the needs of the American workforce, and the development of high-performance organizations."

Congress further recognized that "a direct correlation exists between stability in the family and productivity in the workplace." And, it concluded that "FMLA will encourage the development of high-performance organizations ... When workers can count on durable links to their workplace, they are able to make their own full commitments to their jobs."

For the reasons above, and in the spirit of equity and fairness, I urge you to support this legislation.

Thank you.